

PLOTINIAN PERSONALITY VIII — PATTERN

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This lesson in the Enneads of Plotinus is a consideration of Problems of the Soul (I) through sections twenty-three to twenty-six of the tractate, and the ultimate fullness of living is here the proper appreciation of words and their functioning. The Plotinian approach is through the ideas that are captured and expressed in the words, but in modern thinking the idea as such is nonexistent or has no creative power or existence apart from its expression. The New Thought technique avoids any loss of reality through dealing with the idealism to which the Greek mind was so drawn, but touches soul instead through the mental concept or the word as a catalytic of soul. Body is real in idea, that is, not in the substance it borrows from matter but in its arrangement or patterning of this substance or its embodiment of word or idea. Here is the characteristic root idea of occultism, as well as the basic conception of biological science. It is the acceptance of body as a pattern of the evolution in self-development of its ensouling life or intelligence. To science the manifestation of pattern or idea is in the persistence with which nature follows her own tracks in further specializations of form or Herbert Spencer's familiar dictum that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, i.e., that the development of the individual follows the type-history of that individuality. To occultism the manifestation is the reflection of the individual and the world in each other, not so much as up to a certain stage of development as in a complete complementing of potentiality. This is the familiar doctrine of microcosmos and macrocosmos or man as the little world and the world itself as a cosmic man popularized in medieval times by Paracelsus. The statement of Plotinus is more simple but primitive in seeing the position of the organs in the body as the pattern of the soul's descent into matter. To him the brain is most representative of the realm of the Intellectual-Principle, the heart most in touch with the intermediate realm of personality and the liver closest to pure matter. Here of course is the ancient psychology. The Hebrews did their thinking in their hearts, and had feeling in their bowels. There were variations in location of the faculties, but the conception seems as old as consciousness. Body is pattern per se or the generality of intelligence in which experience is brought to particular or personal intelligence. Plotinus sees that organs participate in soul in a manner peculiar to themselves, and that the actual nature or organ or organism is pure pattern. Thus their nature, as New Thought affirms, is a manifestation of perfect functioning. When there is lack or difficulty it is a matter of pattern lack in the effective consciousness, such as is to be overcome by a proper voicing of existence.

The dynamic of consciousness is its pattern sense or its aptness of word together with its stability of living concept or organic integrity. A genuine occultism therefore trains its students in a word-identified, idea-directed and transcendent idealism always articulate for self or the cosmos. Plotinus is authority for this in his principle that the reasoning faculty is present in all lower experience with its functioning ever a higher as general to the lower. Aspiration thus consists of a seeking for the generalizing experience.

The sustaining value in personality is patterning-capacity or its power at all times to sustain things in their own genius. Body as the vehicle of individualized personality is an organism for the preservation of the own-genius in all elements of personal reality. The alien is broken down or used, as in the case of food and commandeered factors of environment, but body as the microcosmos or little world preserves faithfully the identity of its variant parts or permits their use in sustainment of the larger pattern or the body per se. The physiology of Plotinus is primitive but correct in intuitive conception. The blood for growth and nourishment, carried in the veins and with the veins having origin in the liver, is scientifically an inadequate conception yet suggestive in the light of the mammoth liver of the pre-bone elasmobranch fishes or shark group.

The social genius of the soul is found in its subconscious but constant awareness of pattern reality or its touch with an effective higher in all experience. In its own body which it embraces it is definitely pattern-conscious with linking phases of organic or bodily function to similar organ-functioning in other bodies and their encompassing souls. Body as social within itself permits self's out-streaming to be social or patterned in the very fact of itself. Thus the little world ever complements the cosmic man or great world. Pattern is the essence of eternality, Plotinus indicates, and soul is hence essentially self-complete. It does not remember and is not conditioned but rather it possesses. Its actuality is pattern or higher organism its nature and life. It is and it makes body to be whatever it chooses or voices. The practical aspect of personality is this creative power in everyday life. Most nonoccultists lose the point to transcendental realization by quarreling with the words or taking them in the limitation of materialistic existence and so making them meaningless or ridiculous. Physical facts are not altered by the wave of a magic wand, and mountains do not move at a literally spoken word, but every detail of life is changed according to the acceptance of concepts or word dynamics. Physical efforts go as soul directs them and soul lives in its word of articulated idealism. To Plotinus therefore all fixation of fact is of soul. It is soul that gathers knowing to itself and voices it. The one body approximates being for the convenience of experience but all special principles or magic faculties would be unreal and of no genuine efficacy.

The individuality of personality lies in its effective completeness, and this is a cardinal doctrine of New Thought and occultism. No man need look exterior to himself for any powers of self or soul. Ideas are clarified by the vicarious experience of imagination, with social opportunity contributing to such. However, the social genius is still controlled by the direction of the being. Plotinus demonstrates this through the nature of the mental operation since cognition is always of totality. That is, cognition is of soul rather than of body whose senses are utilized as a convenience of agency because soul alone can know its own movement or have whole perspective. The ultimate distinction of personality is due to the totality of the soul's own movement. Plotinus points out that soul possesses in its own nature whatever it brings to body, utterly independent of exterior agency and wholly at-one in essence with all-soul and thus at all times the complete expression of universal encompassingness or the eternal. Body as effectively soul-directed and personality as freely soul-expressive are as individual as the identities caught in ultimate bondage to the partible word of matter, but individuality with them is universal in this very distinction rather than suggesting the loss of ultimate estate they reveal the presence of immortal actuality. All livingness is in an accompaniment by the higher, and it is only necessary that this higher be given voice.

SUGGESTIONS FOR REVIEW AND APPLICATION

- (1) What is the basic Plotinian approach to words? Of what does the reality of body consist? How does body use words or ideas to express this reality? What is a catalytic? When is a word a catalytic? How is pattern manifest in science?
- (2) How did Paracelsus express the idea of pattern? How did Plotinus develop the idea? How does New Thought use pattern to overcome lack? What is idealism? What kind of idealism does genuine occultism train its students to use? For what purpose?
- (3) How does personality function in its pattern capacity? To what extent is soul pattern-conscious? When and how is it aware subconsciously of pattern?
- (4) When does the use of words contribute to limitation? What use of words brings power in freedom to the user? Through what medium is voice given to the higher?
- (5) What contributes to the effective completeness of personality? What is meant by cognition? What comparative relation exists between body, soul and personality? What is the source of soul's power throughout? How does it express this?